

NOTES & NEWS

Bivonia sutilis (Mörch, 1862) Re-Established as a Valid Species

BY

SANDRA M. GARDNER

Since 1862, when Otto A. Mörch described a vermetid, *Bivonia sutilis* from a single specimen growing on one valve of *Venus subimbricata* Sowerby, from western Central America, no material which matched his description has been recognized or identified until now.

The holotype of this shell is in the British Museum (Natural History), Registry No. 197878.

With the passage of over 100 years and without material clearly identifiable as *Bivonia sutilis*, the species was synonymized, with question, with *Aletes centiquadrus* (Valenciennes, 1846) by KEEN in 1958 and with *Tripsycha (Eualetes) centiquadra* (Valenciennes, 1846) by KEEN in 1971.

A photograph of the holotype of *Bivonia sutilis* shows a growth habit of early irregular, almost planorboid, coiling which changes as the animal grows, to one vertical tube which then turns downward in the manner of a hook and finally reattaches itself to the substrate.

Material collected in the Gulf of California in 1978 and 1980 by Carol Skoglund matches the picture of the type and has been identified as the species *Bivonia sutilis* by Dr. Keen, who has a photograph of the type in her possession. A single specimen collected by Andre Villanueva at Cebu, the Philippines, in 1981 shows a marked resemblance to the Gulf of California material.

Most of the modern specimens have a slightly different growth habit, with the mature vertical tube remaining free. This suggests that the reattachment of the mature tube to the substrate may be an occasional trait, not necessarily characteristic of the animal's growth. Modern specimens have smoother sculpture than that of the holotype, indicating variation in the species.

The generic assignment of this species remains in doubt. The form is a white tube of 7 to 9mm diameter with earlier whorls coiled like those of a *Serpulorbis* (Sassi, 1827).

As the animal reaches maturity it forms a vertical tube which at some midway point breaks off and starts growing another tube at an angle. The original broken tube remains as a "scar."

Although this growth pattern resembles that of a *Serpulorbis*, generic allocation either to *Tripsycha* or to *Serpulorbis* rests on the basis of the presence or absence of an operculum; *Serpulorbis* is inoperculate. Observation of living animals in the field will be necessary for generic identification.

Mörch notes, with his description of *Bivonia sutilis*, that a similar form, *Vermetus semisurrectus* (Bivona, 1832) occurs in the Mediterranean. This information, taken with these specimens from the type locality of the Gulf of California and from the Indo-Pacific raises the possibility that this species may be distributed widely beyond western Central America. This would have to be confirmed by anatomical study of the soft parts.

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